



# House Select Committee on Homeland Security Democrats

**JIM TURNER, Ranking Member**

[www.house.gov/hsc/democrats/](http://www.house.gov/hsc/democrats/)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 22, 2004**

**Contact: Moira Whelan**

**(202) 226-8827**

*Congressman Jim Turner, Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, made the following statement at a joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Infrastructure & Border Security and the Committee on Government Reform Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, & Human Resources on "Counter Narcotics at the Department of Homeland Security: How Well are Anti-Drug Trafficking Operations Being Supported and Coordinated?"*

Thank you Chairman Camp and Chairman Souder.

I would like to welcome all of our witnesses. The work that you are doing is vital to this country. I thank you for your commitment to the Department's fight against drug trafficking.

Chairman Souder, the Homeland Security Committee has held several hearings over the past year and a half to examine the ongoing coordination challenges faced by the Department. For instance, we've looked at intelligence information sharing, and air and marine coordination. Counter narcotics coordination is one area, however, we have yet to examine, so I'm glad we're here today to focus on this important mission.

As you know, Mr. Chairmen, four DHS agencies are on the "front lines" in the war against illegal drugs: Customs and Border Protection; Border Patrol; Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Coast Guard. In fact, out of the 22 federal agencies that have counter narcotics missions, CBP, Border Patrol, and ICE, combined, account for over half of all **large** drug seizures. These agencies have a long history of working together – at least 20 to 30 years in the case of legacy Customs units and the Coast Guard.

The need for coordination on counter narcotics mission is not new. While it is important that we understand how these agencies continue to improve the coordination of their counter narcotics missions and operations, it will be instructive to hear from the witnesses how the addition of a new primary mission - the prevention of and response to terrorist attacks - has impacted their ability to carry out their counter narcotics duties.

There is no doubt that the merger and reorganization of former Customs and the Immigration and Naturalization Service units has been challenging. I understand Chairman Souder's concern that counter narcotics enforcement – not typically thought of as a homeland security mission – may be getting short shrift.

Mr. Mackin, I look forward to hearing about your strategy to strengthen coordination of DHS counter narcotics operations and how that will work with DHS' core mission of preventing a terrorist attack. Particularly, I want to know how far along you are in developing a comprehensive counter narcotics strategy for DHS agencies. I also would like to hear about any specific challenges you have faced since taking this job – and any additional authorities you believe are needed.

Thank you again Mr. Chairmen, I look forward to today's testimony.